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ABSTRACT

This case study presents a first-hand account of learning to teach, occasioned by an educational researcher's consultation visit to Thailand. The visit entailed the teaching skills of lecturing, and conducting workshops and consultation meetings. The difficulties of this task were exacerbated by the consultant's lack of prior formal teaching experience and are comparable to experiences shared by all new teachers. Not unlike many novices, the consultant had formed a number of ideas about teaching and learning that influenced the ability to teach and the ability to learn more about teaching. The paper describes difficulties both in learning about the audience and in learning how to present ideas to an audience. The paper is organized into three main stages of learning: (1) initial ideas developed about teaching through other experiences; (2) advice received prior to the trip; and (3) what was learned in the actual teaching situation. The description of the third stage includes a discussion of the teacher's role as a connector of subject matter to learners, the importance of understanding both subject matter and learners, and learning to teach to audience expectations. (LL)

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Center for Research
on Teacher Education

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LEARNING TO TEACH IN A DIFFERENT CULTURE

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Abstract

This paper is a personal account of learning to teach. Though the author has conducted research in education for several years, she had very little formal teaching experiences prior to this account. Nevertheless, like many novices, she had formed a number of ideas about teaching and learning that influenced her ability to teach and her ability to learn more about teaching. In this case, the occasion for learning to teach was not a new teaching position in the United States, but instead a consulting visit to another country which entailed a combination of lectures, workshops, and consultation meetings. The paper describes the author's difficulties both in learning about this new audience and in learning how to present ideas to an audience. Though the experiences she describes are unusual, because they are cross-national, many features of apply to all novice teachers, regardless of when and where they learn to teach.

LEARNING TO TEACH IN A DIFFERENT CULTURE

Mary M. Kennedy[1]

This paper is a personal account of learning to teach, occasioned by a trip to Thailand in which I was expected to participate in a number of activities that could be construed as teaching. I had to present some lectures, participate in roundtable discussions, provide workshops, and provide advice and consultation. The work proved to be difficult for me in part because I had very little experience doing this sort of work, and in part because my Thai audiences held different assumptions than I did about what should occur during these events. It took me a long time to adjust my practice to accommodate their expectations. To the extent that the difficulties I experienced are similar to those all new teachers experience, this account may be construed as a case study of learning to teach. Indeed, many of the ingredients in this case are found in other case studies of learning to teach: The strength and resiliency of my own prior beliefs, for instance, made it hard for me to understand what was expected of me and to adjust my behavior accordingly. On the other side, one of my hosts adopted me, became my mentor, and gave me explicit guidance about what to do. I suspect that, without this guidance, I would not have learned much at all.

One thing that surprised me in this episode was my strong desire to do what was expected. What made this learning experience difficult was the tension between, on one hand, my initial ideas about my role as a teacher and on the other my desire to "Do the Right Thing." In this case, the Right Thing was almost incomprehensible to me because it differed so much from the initial ideas I brought with me. Yet I could tell, from the reactions of my audiences, that I was not doing the Right Thing. So I experienced a double frustration: not understanding what was expected of me, yet understanding that I was not doing what was expected. Consequently, my teaching practices were disappointing both to me and to my hosts.

I organize the paper around the main stages of my learning. The first stage consists of my initial ideas about teaching, those ideas I had somehow developed through other

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[1] Mary M. Kennedy, professor of teacher education at Michigan State University, is director of the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning. The author would like to acknowledge the very helpful contributions to this paper from her Thai colleagues at Chulalongkorn University: Dr. Sumwong Pitiyanawat, Dr. Snanchit Sukontasap, Dr. Suwatana Suwanketnikom, Dr. Jaithip Chuaratanophong, and Ms. Oonta Nopakun. They were kind enough to read an earlier draft of this paper and to add further insights into the cultural differences she observed. No doubt the paper still reflects numerous misunderstandings. These are due entirely to the author's own limitations and do not reflect those of her Thai colleagues.

experiences. The second stage consists of the advice I received prior to my trip, and the third stage consists of what I learned *in situ*.

Stage One: Prior Knowledge

To appreciate what was entailed in my learning to teach, I need first to describe what I understood about teaching before this experience. An important part of my biography is the fact that I have taught very little in my career. Unlike many people in education, I did not begin my career as a teacher, but instead moved directly from a bachelor's degree in experimental psychology (with no teaching credential) to a graduate program in educational psychology. Moreover, as a graduate student, I did not hold any teaching assistantships. Instead, my assistantships were all in research. From graduate school, I moved directly to a position in the U.S. Department of Education and continued to hold nonacademic appointments until 1986, when I joined the faculty at Michigan State University. In the 18 years since I finished my PhD, I taught only three times—two evening courses at universities in the Washington area, and a third after coming to MSU. So I had had very limited experience doing the kind of work we normally think of as teaching. Yet I had numerous other experiences that contributed to my ideas about teaching. These experiences, and the views that derived from them, are important to my story.

My work experiences have been almost exclusively on large research projects that involved several people. Each experience included many interesting and stimulating conversations. Most of them, for instance, involved group decision making and consequently were highly dependent on conversation. Even as a study director, I tended to offer alternative ideas, raise questions, point out discrepancies, and so forth, rather than give specific directions. I think I assumed that, through group discussion and argument, the best ideas would eventually emerge. But a side benefit of group decision making is that I learned a great deal by having to sort through these competing ideas, and I found the process stimulating and enjoyable. From these experiences, I came to view conversations as an important route to learning and came to prefer this style of leadership.

I also have engaged in a great deal of consulting. Consulting usually occurs in the form of conferences which are also conversational; that is, the typical format is a group of 20 or so people sitting around a large table. Generally speaking, about 75 percent of the participants are working on a project and the remaining 25 percent are consultants. Consultant meetings usually begin with project people telling what they are trying to do and what problems they are encountering, and then gradually evolve into conversations with

consultants commenting freely throughout. These conversations have been extremely thought provoking, and I always felt I learned a lot from them.

So my experiences led me to believe that learning occurs through conversations . In my own research and consulting experiences, conversations juxtaposed different points of view and different arguments, and in so doing, stimulated everyone to refine their own thinking. Through these experiences, I had, implicitly, come to perceive "learning" as refining thought rather than as, say, gaining better techniques or new factual knowledge. I myself learned a great deal from these interactions, in the sense that the quality of my own thinking improved, even though my official role as "director" or "consultant" may have implied that I was supposed to be the expert to begin with. But these ideas about what learning is and how learning occurs were tacit. Prior to my experience learning to teach, I could not have articulated them. Moreover, I had, and still have, no evidence that *anyone else* participating in these conversations found them to be educational. Since I did not think of myself as a teacher, I never thought to test explicitly anyone's learning during these conversations. The benefits I perceived reflected the learning *I* experienced, not the learning I witnessed in anyone else.

Until my experience in Thailand, I did not realize that I had formed any particular view of teaching or of directing research, but I now realize that I drew a strong analogy between "directing" and "teaching," and assumed that both roles should be enacted in roughly the same way. There are several flaws with this analogy that I was unaware of at the time. I had not considered, for instance, the possibility that I profited from conversations at least in part because my colleagues and I shared a substantial knowledge base, or because my colleagues and I shared an understanding of what our collective task was. It had not occurred to me that teachers may not always have the benefit of so much shared knowledge and goals between themselves and their students.

It was the conflict between my own tacit beliefs and the expectations of my hosts that made me realize the depth and significance of my own assumptions. The Thais with whom I spent most of my time were educators and had logged far more hours teaching than I had. They were members of Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Education and many had been classroom teachers prior to moving to the university. More than the U.S. system, the Thai education system has historically emphasized didactic instruction. Although contemporary education policies and curricula stress inquiry-oriented learning, habits die hard and I often heard teacher educators discuss the problem of trying to get their teachers to abandon their "chalk and talk" pedagogy. This form of instruction characterizes even graduate education at Chulalongkorn, the leading university in the country.

One reason didactic instruction extends so far up into the system is because the habit is so strongly built in through the lower grade levels, but another important reason is that many of the textbooks for advanced graduate courses are in English, not in Thai. Consequently, a standard method of graduate-level instruction is for faculty to transmit orally to students the contents of expensive, English-language texts. This practice maintains the passivity of students and maintains the view that learning consists of passively receiving fixed bodies of knowledge. Even when a text is given out to students to read, the classroom discussion about the text is often confined to clarifying what exactly the text says. Thus, once a budding faculty member has completed the entire education sequence in Thailand, from first grade through graduate coursework, he or she has a firmly established habit of listening and taking notes when in a classroom or seminar setting.

Other aspects of the Thai culture also promote student passivity. The Thai culture is remarkably deferential to people in authority roles, and it is very difficult for most Thais to speak out in the presence of an authority. Status is even built into the Thai language. For instance, whereas the English language provides words for siblings that announce their gender (brother and sister) the Thai language offers words that announce the sibling's seniority—younger versus older sibling. Thais also have several different words for "I," each used by people of different status. These linguistic patterns illustrate how deeply authority and status relationships are embedded in the Thai culture.

One further cultural difference merits discussion. As an American, I tend to be quite task-oriented. When I meet with groups, it is usually for the purpose of solving some problem, and so I expect participants to be relatively quick and forthcoming in their effort to define the problems they hope to address in the conversation. Thais, in part because of their concern for status, are hesitant to reveal their problems to people they don't know well and prefer instead to attend to ceremony and to do things that will honor their guests.

These differences between my experiences and the experiences of my hosts were substantial, and in turn yielded substantially different ideas about how we should interact with one another most productively. I had come to assume tacitly that learning occurred when people exchanged ideas and I expected everyone to be candid about what problems they were trying to solve. Thais, on the other hand, were reluctant to reveal themselves to me, and instead wanted me to do all the talking.

The word "information" was used extensively when I would ask the purpose of a meeting or ask what I should do in preparation for a meeting. "Give us information" was the typical response. This was a truly unique idea for me, and I was not sure I really had information that I could package and deliver. In my work, even when I knew in advance

I had knowledge to offer to others, I never felt a need to formulate my knowledge in advance so that I could present it intact. Instead, I assumed that whatever I had to offer would come forth naturally in the course of the conversation. The Thais, on the other hand, expect visiting scholars to have their knowledge organized and ready to present. And this expectation extended far beyond sessions that were labeled "lectures." Many of the events I attended were labeled "meeting" or "roundtable discussion" or "consultation," but regardless of the label, the expectation was that I would open the session with a speech that would last for some one and a half hours. These speeches proved to be quite taxing for me: I discovered that I was not very aware of what I knew and that I was not able to articulate it, let alone organize it so that I could efficiently share it with others.[2]

Speeches were also difficult because I had previously assumed that my knowledge would be most useful if it was offered in the context of problems *they* were working on. The more interaction I would have with someone, the more likely I would be to formulate my knowledge to fit their needs, and the more likely they would be to articulate issues that I was capable of addressing. But the Thais preferred that I make a formal presentation *before* any interaction occurred. And even after a presentation, they were hesitant to volunteer any observations of their own. When I would open a session for discussion, their response was usually to ask me to clarify points already made. Consequently, I had difficulty learning enough about them to identify things I knew that might be of use to them.

Our differences in expectations extended even to such mundane matters as how audiovisual props support a lecture. Because my experiences were restricted to group problem-solving meetings, I had come to assume that, if a blackboard was used during a "lesson," it was used spontaneously to clarify communications: to record and sort out the various ideas being considered. But in Thailand, I never met, lectured, advised or consulted in a room that had a blackboard. In all of these situations, I was expected to open with a lecture that was accompanied by overhead transparencies. And these had to be prepared in advance. My Thai audience expected me to know ahead of time what I would say, and therefore expected me to be able to prepare overhead transparencies summarizing the main points before even meeting my audience.

At the time, I felt that these requests for information were unreasonable, and that we would proceed much faster if we could just roll up our sleeves and get down to work: if we could just talk to each other. At the time, I thought the Thais had naive ideas about

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[2]When my Thai colleagues read the draft of this paper, one of them pointed out that I was the only foreign visitor who was *not* able to do this for them. All the others had managed the format handily.

how knowledge should be shared. In retrospect, though, I think they had developed a very clever and functional strategy for taking advantage of an outsider while at the same time maintaining proprieties. Asking me for information was a way to recognize my authority and at the same time to avoid revealing any of their problems. In addition, speeches relieved the Thais of the difficult task of trying to formulate their ideas in English. But the one-directional speech also had another important advantage: If I had offered advice, they would be in the difficult position of having to defer to my expertise and take the advice, even if it was not good advice. By asking me only for information, they avoided the potentially embarrassing situation of receiving inappropriate advice. And, through mental experiments, they could place what I said into the context of their own situations and problems and to decide which ideas, if any, might be useful to them. And they could do this without revealing any of their weaknesses to me.

With the advantage of this retrospective analysis, it is easy to see that I could not reasonably expect people raised in such a culture, and educated in such an education system, to vent freely their different ideas in a seminar with a visiting professor from another country. But that is the advantage of hindsight. At the time, I had no such advantage, and moreover, had no teaching techniques at my disposal to help me present information in a manner that would have been appropriate to this culture.[3]

The situation I faced, then, was very similar to the situations many novice teachers in the United States face, in several respects. First, like all novice teachers, I had ideas about what should happen in the classroom, about what my role should be, about what role the students should play, and about how learning occurs. Second, these ideas came exclusively from my own narrow band of experiences which I had never questioned. It had never occurred to me that my experiences might not apply in all situations. And third, these ideas were largely tacit. One could argue that the difference between my tacit expectations and those of my hosts make this illustration of learning to teach irrelevant to most novice teachers, since most novice teachers teach within their own countries. But the mix of populations in the United States means that there can be substantial cultural differences between teachers and students. Moreover, as one of my Thai colleagues pointed out, virtually every other American guest who visited Thailand under this exchange program had been able to accommodate this audience. So the problems I encountered were not entirely

[3]I should point out, too, that it is not clear that the American style of group discussion is necessarily better. On reading the draft of this paper, one of my Thai colleagues who had visited my research center at Michigan State acknowledged the active involvement of all participants in meetings by pointing out that "Everybody talks. Nobody listens."

due to cultural differences. They were also due to the particular package of personal experiences that I brought when I learned to teach.

Even if most novice teachers do not face differences as great as those described here, the differences they do encounter constitute serious barriers to productive teaching. And regardless of whether one learns to teach in a different country or with a different group within one's own country, teachers need to overcome these barriers by recognizing their own tacit views and recognizing the tacit views of their students.

As I said, I had not been aware of my own beliefs on these issues prior to this visit to Thailand. It was the difference between my expectations and theirs, coupled with the fact that both sets of expectations were tacit, that made it difficult for us to find a comfortable path for communicating. The story of how this path was formed is my story of learning to teach.

Stage Two: Preparation for Teaching

The visit to Thailand was part of a "linkage" grant that supported exchange between Michigan State University and Chulalongkorn University. I was one of several MSU faculty who would be visiting the University. The U.S. director of the linkage project prepared me for the visit and, in so doing, gave me my first instruction in how to teach. Among other things, he warned me that, even though virtually everyone I would meet had very good English, language would be a problem in teaching. To facilitate communication, he suggested that I do three things: (1) speak slowly, (2) include an overhead transparency that summarized my main points, thus reinforcing my oral messages, and (3) try to provide a handout as well, so that they would not have to write notes in English or try to translate my words into Thai.

This initial advice presented me with a dilemma, for I really didn't have a good idea of what I would say. How could I, while sitting in my office in East Lansing, prepare summaries of remarks I would make a month later in a country I had never visited to people whom I had never met? I still knew too little of what they were interested in, what they thought, or how I could help them to know what I might want to say.

But I did use his advice to prepare for lectures. Many of the events on my schedule were lectures, with topics already provided. So my first step in preparing to teach was to pull all my recent research papers from my drawer, match them as best I could to the topics they had wanted me to lecture on, and prepare outlines of each. These outlines, I reasoned, would be the overheads and handouts to accompany my lectures. With my prewritten papers and outlines in hand, I felt I was prepared at least to give lectures.

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The second important thing the project director told me pertained to the workshops. Thais, he said, are very reluctant to speak out in a classroom setting, in part because they are unsure of their language and in part because they have a strong cultural history of being deferential to teachers or anyone else in a position of authority. So I should not expect a lot of classroom participation. This admonition presented a very serious dilemma, for I could not imagine teaching without conversation. Moreover, the workshops were to last two days each and I could not imagine spending two full days with a group of people who would not speak to me. How could I fill the time?

Finally, he said that workshop participants might not have a chance to read any relevant materials prior to the workshop,[4] so that if there were articles I thought they should know about, I should plan to summarize them during the workshop. This news had both a negative and a positive effect on me. On one hand, I had never engaged in such a didactic practice before, and could not imagine myself standing before a group reciting what one after another author had said. On the other hand, it did offer a way to fill the two days of workshop time, and I had no other ideas.

Apart from the various presentations and workshops, I was visiting Chulalongkorn University to help the Faculty of Education establish a research center[5] and to help the faculty plan for an international conference on teacher education. I assumed this work would be analogous to consulting I had done in this country and felt quite comfortable with this part of the task. Overall, then, as I prepared for the trip, I felt I could handle the lectures, felt I could handle meetings called roundtable discussions, and felt quite at ease with the idea of consulting. But I had no idea how to handle a two-day workshop with no conversation and had serious concerns about how these might be done.

I should also point out that, despite my qualms about the workshops, I never sought advice from anyone else about them, even though I worked in a college of education. I suspect this was due in part to a reluctance to admit to my colleagues, who presumable were experts in teaching, that I had never really thought about teaching. But it was also due in part to a view that I shared with many novices that, once the time came, I would somehow know what to do. Like many novices, I was banking on my native intelligence and assumed I would be able to muddle through.

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[4]Faculty there are enormously busy, and often the logistics of sending materials in advance and getting them copied and collated leaves little time for reading in advance anyway.

[5]At the time I visited, the center had a name—the Center for Policy Research in Education, but little else.

Stage Three: Learning by Doing

Virtually every experience I had during this trip was instructive in some way, but I will confine my remarks to a series of seven critical events that were particularly salient to my learning. These seven events are as follows:

1. Monday, January 21. *My first two consulting meetings*: One with the faculty who wanted to establish the research center and one with the faculty who were planning the international conference on teacher education.

2. Tuesday and Wednesday, January 22-23. *The first two-day workshop*. The topic was "Alternative Approaches to Research on Teacher Education."

3. Friday, January 25. *Meeting with the president of the university*.

4. Same Friday, January 25. *My second two consulting meetings*. These meetings were the same as the first two: one was with faculty who wanted to establish the research center and the other with the faculty who were planning the international conference.

5. Tuesday, January 29. *Roundtable discussion with education deans* in the region.

6. Wednesday and Thursday, January 30-31: *The second two-day workshop*. The topic was "Qualitative Research Methodology."

7. Friday and Saturday, February 1-2: Faculty Retreat to establish the research agenda for the center and the agenda for the international conference.

1. The First Two Consulting Meetings

The first consulting meeting on my agenda was "Meet with members of the educational policy forum and committee of the Center for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)." Both of these groups consisted of faculty who had some interest or responsibility for establishing this new research center. I was anxious to meet with this group since I understood my main contribution to be helping them establish the center, and so far I knew very little about what they had in mind. Prior to the meeting, one of my hosts told me that the group would like me to open the meeting by talking about how my research center was organized and managed. This request sounded as if they thought there was a codified body of knowledge on "running a research center," and that I could, in a speech with some overhead transparencies, convey this body of knowledge to them.

Yet I had no single way of "running a center." In the variety of research projects I had managed, I had organized groups of people in a number of different ways, with the strategy depending on what the research tasks happened to be. In every case, though, the strategy was merely a guess, a prediction with very little basis in fact. I could not possibly have articulated the principles that guided the various organizations I had devised. It is only now, in hindsight, that I can surmise that my Thai colleagues really were interested simply in an account of my experiences, focusing on whatever I thought was salient, so that they could contrast this experience with their own and form some ideas about what I might have to offer them.

Still, from my point of view, the request was hard to respond to. Should I talk about how the budgeting was done, how the students and support staff were organized, how the research was conceptualized, how the researchers themselves were organized, or perhaps about the tacit and explicit incentives MSU offered for doing research? I didn't know where to begin. They, on the other hand, could not give me more specific guidance because all of this was so new to them. Had I asked for clarification, they wouldn't have understood the question.

One thing I had discerned through informal conversations with my hosts was that they did not understand how to account for faculty time when one portion of it is allocated to a center and another portion to teaching. So I decided I would tell them about the system we had devised at MSU to do this, and would tell them about the different organizational structures my center had used during its different phases. I still assumed, though, that this would be a rather brief presentation and that we would move quickly to a conversation. I felt a strong need to interact with them. I wanted to learn more about their situation so that I could figure out how I could help them.

The meeting was held in a room that was so formal that it virtually prohibited conversation. It looked like a place where United Nations delegates might meet. It held a round table large enough to seat 50 or more people, and electronic units were placed all around the table. Each unit held both a microphone and a speaker. Whenever someone wanted to speak they turn on their own microphone. Whenever a microphone was off, the speaker part of the unit broadcasts someone else's remarks. At the head of the table was an overhead projector, and I was offered this position at the table. There were only a half a dozen other people present, and they all sat together on one side of the table, with three or four empty chairs separating me from them.

The formality of this setting reveals another important cultural difference between Thais and Americans that is relevant to this story. As a task-oriented American, I was

anxious to move past the formalities, to roll up my sleeves and get to work. But the Thais value ceremony a great deal, and saw this arrangement as a way to honor their guest. Their choice of this most auspicious room was a way of conferring status on me, as their foreign guest. Similarly, placing me at the head of the table and asking me to speak first is a way of showing respect. The Thais are very proud of their respectfulness, but the significance of their gesture was, at that time, something that I was unable to grasp.

Speaking into my microphone to these six people, I described the system at MSU: how we allocate time between research and teaching and how center directors, department chairs, and faculty negotiate work loads. Then I described the different organizations my center had been through, and said that the organization depended on the nature of the work to be done. The talk lasted only 20 or 30 minutes, and I then said I would like to know more about their plans for their center, and how their system differed from this. No one responded to this invitation. Instead they limited themselves to questions asking for further information, more details about how we did things at MSU. I answered a lot of questions, but felt I was not being very helpful to them, and I sensed that they were not satisfied either. Either they were asking the wrong questions or I was not responding with the kind of answers they sought. I could not ascertain where the gap was and so I felt helpless in the very area that I had expected to be most helpful.[6]

The afternoon meeting was listed on my schedule as "Consulting Service with the International Conference Committee." This meeting was held in a more convivial room, a small conference room that could seat only six or eight people. Again, I was given a seat at the head of the table. Four others were there, seated two on either side of me. I had received less preparation going into this meeting, so had no idea what would transpire. They asked me to open with some remarks, and I said I needed to learn more about the conference. What goals did they have, for instance? Was there a theme, some idea of size, and so forth? We sallied back and forth for a while, with them insisting that they wanted to hear from me, and me insisting that I needed to learn more from them first. At one point, one of the participants said in an exasperated voice that the reason they brought me here was to hear my ideas about what the conference should accomplish and how it should do this. After all, I was the expert. I left this meeting just as I had left the first: frustrated at my inability to help and unsure of what I could do to change the situation.

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[6]Their silence could have indicated either a reluctance to admit that they didn't have any ideas for their center yet or that they didn't find what I said to be of interest. I assumed it was the latter, but had no basis for assuming this. Again, my criterion for "success" was that we would engage in a lively conversation about alternative ideas. It is possible that, from their point of view, the session was a success either because they learned something about my center or because the event had been conducted properly.

2. The First Two-Day Workshop

The topic of my first workshop was "Alternative Approaches to Research on Teacher Education." I felt more prepared to offer this workshop than I did the second workshop, because I had just taught a course on this same topic at MSU. However, the teaching strategy I had used at MSU had been largely conversational. I had stated at the outset that I wanted the students to learn to reason about research and that much of our time would be spent thinking about rival hypotheses, weighing the seriousness of them, and deciding what conclusions could really be drawn from each study. I even told them that their grade would depend in part on their participation in class discussions. After that, almost every session consisted of student argument about the merits of individual studies.

Because of the earlier advice of the linkage grant project director, and because of my initial experiences in Thailand, I was ready to talk a lot more than I ever have talked before and I had overheads and handouts to accompany my talk. Still, despite the project director's admonitions, and despite my first consulting experiences, I persisted in thinking I would be able to stimulate some discussion among workshop participants that might be similar to those my American students had held.

The way I had started the conversation at MSU was to describe a survey in which teachers had been asked to assess the value of their teacher education programs. I described the study and the questions that were asked, and then asked students to predict the study findings. This proved to be a very effective device for getting students interested in the course content because the findings were quite different from what students had predicted. The difference had stimulated them to think harder about teacher education and how it influences teachers. Part of the success of this device, of course, is creating a mystery and getting students involved in solving it before revealing the findings. But when I entered the Thai workshop on Tuesday morning, all the handouts I had ordered had been collated and distributed to students as they entered the door. The top page in the packet showed the findings from this survey. So much for the element of surprise.

The workshop room was arranged with a lectern at the front with a microphone on it and an overhead projector next to it. There was no blackboard. Facing the lectern were rows of desks with chairs, roughly like a classroom might be arranged except that the desks were adjacent to one another, so that they looked almost like long tables with rows of chairs behind them. There were probably seats for 50 people, but only a half a dozen people were there, two faculty and four or five graduate students scattered throughout the full range of the room. There was also a camera and cameraman off to one side.

The setting seemed so foreign to me, despite my preparation for it, that I opened by saying that, if I were teaching this workshop in the United States, I would probably ask everyone to form a circle in the front of the room, rather than sit scattered throughout the room. The participants immediately got up and re-arranged the furniture, forming a squared-off U shape of desks and chairs around the lectern. I can't say in retrospect whether I really intended them to do this, or if I was merely acknowledging aloud my own uneasiness with the situation. But once the participants had rearranged themselves, I realized that it was a foolish idea because they had moved the desks as well as the chairs, so that the arrangement was still physically very large for such a small number of people, and it still felt very formal. Moreover, I still had to speak into the microphone for the benefit of the videotaping and still had to use the overhead projector.

As I launched into my talk, I found that it was difficult to manage the microphone, the lectern and the overheads all at once. There was no table nearby to sort papers and overheads, and whenever I leaned away from the lectern and toward the overhead projector, my voice did not reach the microphone. In addition, the overhead was on the right and I am left-handed.

I also found that, in spite of my efforts to gather a huge amount of material with which to fill the time, I was moving through it too quickly. This was partly because I was so uncomfortable with the speaking arrangement and with managing the overheads that I did not talk as naturally as I otherwise might have. Instead of elaborating on ideas, or providing examples, I simply recited content. And, in my nervousness, I spoke too quickly.

Very early on, I realized that I was going to run out of material way too soon at the rate I was going, and that I had to find some way to extend it. It occurred to me that, if I could not get them to offer hypotheses and speculations about the findings I was presenting, perhaps I could get them to tell me about research in Thailand that was similar to the research I was describing from the United States. So I asked them if they knew of studies conducted in Thailand that were similar to the studies I was describing. This seemed to me to be a very nonthreatening question, one that they could answer without embarrassment.

Silence.

Then more silence. At last one of the two participating faculty members tried to help me out. This was a man who had just finished his graduate work in the United States three years earlier, and probably had some idea of what I was trying to do. With his help, and that of the other faculty member, we managed to hold a stilted and very short conversation. Then I noticed that one of the graduate students was muttering something to her neighbor about some findings we had been looking at, so I asked her if she would share her comment

with the class. She giggled with embarrassment at my request and sat silently. I prodded again, and she finally tried to speak. She seemed very young, and her embarrassment was so acute that speech was nearly impossible. She would say three words, then laugh and hide her face in her hands, then repeat this sequence. I felt extremely sorry for her, and sorrier still that I had put her in this position. The U.S. project director was right: conversation was not an option, and I still had no other options to offer.

We limped through the rest of the first day. I continued to be awkward and ill at ease, and continued to worry that I didn't have enough to say. I tried to slow myself down, following the project director's advice that language would be a problem, but although this helped stretch the material out, it made me even more self-conscious of my speaking and less able to elaborate on ideas and to speak as I naturally would. Occasionally, I would try again to get a conversation going. At one point, the Thai faculty member who had helped me out before asked me if he could speak to the group in Thai, and I agreed. I had no idea what he was saying, but felt sure it was something like, "Please have patience with this poor misguided foreigner, and try to humor her." But after he spoke, a few people asked him questions in Thai, and he then related these questions to me. Apparently, he had repeated some of my points in Thai and encouraged the others to ask him questions in Thai. Though he was able to get some response from the audience, the questions continued to be largely for clarification. Nothing even remotely close to the kind of conversation I felt I needed in order to teach.

Since my (tacit) goal was to juxtapose alternative interpretations of the research evidence, and since the workshop participants would not generate these for me, I tried to present the alternative interpretations myself. But participants seemed bored with this. They just sat and stared at me. They took no notes. The only time these students took notes was when I presented a specific new concept. For instance, at one point, I mentioned that a criticism of a particular research methodology was that it treated teacher education as a "black box," and explained what that term meant. When this concept was presented, all the pencils began scribbling. Then they went back to staring at me while I presented other interpretations and arguments.

In the evening, I tried to prepare even more material to present the following day, realizing that in spite of all the preparations for the first day, I had not had enough material. When I arrived at the workshop door in the morning, my hosts suggested that perhaps we should shorten the workshop to a half-day, since there was such a small audience. Could I collapse the material?

Of course I could! What a relief! I worked my way, still clumsily and stiltedly, through the full day of material I had gathered together, and was still easily finished by noon. We all breathed a sigh of relief that this painful event was finished.

3. Meeting With the President of the University

After what I perceived to be two unsuccessful consultations on Monday and a disastrous workshop on Tuesday and Wednesday, I finally experienced some modest success on Friday. The day opened with a brief visit with the president of the university, and continued through two more consultation meetings, one with the research center planning committee and one with the conference planning committee. Dr. Charas, the president of Chulalongkorn University, is a very animated and thoughtful man who takes his responsibility as university president seriously. He was anxious for the Faculty of Education to establish this new research center, in part because he believes the university should be more actively engaged in research, and in part because he believes educational policy can profit from research. In fact, he volunteered that he himself faced some difficult policy issues that he hoped the new center would help him with.

Then he described some of the issues he struggled with. One was the question of institutional autonomy. This issue had arisen because the government was considering removing the state universities from the civil service system and giving them autonomy roughly like universities in the United States have. The second issue he was grappling with was the concept of academic freedom. While he strongly endorses the concept of academic freedom, and believes it enhances the intellectual life of the university, apparently some faculty had been accused of using academic freedom for personal gains, and he was unsure of what the university's posture should be in this area. He said he thought he would benefit from having some "solid information" about these issues.

The issues Dr. Charas was struggling with, and the kind of help he sought from research, reminded me of the frustrating relationship researchers and policymakers have experienced in the United States. Policies necessarily entail difficult value judgments, and controversial policy decisions are controversial because of the complex values involved in them. Policymakers often seek empirical research in the hope that it can simplify the issue, making the decision easier. And researchers often hope to serve policy makers in just this way. But real research rarely makes such a contribution. It does not alleviate the

value-laden aspects of the issue, and it often renders even the factual aspects of the issue more complex rather than less so.[7]

Though my visit with Dr. Charas was intended mainly as a courtesy call, it proved to be extremely useful to me. It was one of the very few occasions when a Thai spoke both candidly and articulately about policy issues in Thailand. The conversation, and my later reflections on it, contributed substantially to my later teaching strategies.

4. The Second Two Consulting Meetings

I had about a half hour between my interview with President Charas and my second consultation with the research center planning group. This meeting was to occur in the same United Nations room as the first meeting, the room with the large round table and the microphone/speaker units. This time I knew I would have to open the meeting with a speech, even if the meeting was called a roundtable discussion, and so I spent this brief half hour trying to figure out what I could say.

At the same time I was contemplating what to say at this meeting, I was also puzzling over the things President Charas had said and wondering if I could help the members of this new policy research center gain a better understanding of the relationship between research and policy. It was during this rumination that I hit on an idea for my presentation. I would talk about how to translate policy issues into research projects. I prepared an overhead transparency that listed three steps in the process of translating policy issues into research projects. Step one was identifying the issue, step two was to list researchable questions that were relevant to the issue, and step three was to design studies that would address the questions.

In my talk, I illustrated these steps using a policy study I had conducted in Washington prior to coming to MSU.[8] I pointed out that the policy issues governing the study were too vague to study, and then showed the list of research questions my study team had eventually generated. Then I showed them the list of projects we had actually conducted.

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[7]The high value placed on deference to authority in Thailand was brought home to me when my Thai colleagues read the earlier draft of this paper. In the earlier draft, I had opened this paragraph by saying, "I was surprised by Dr. Charas's choice of issues. . . ." The Thai readers were concerned that my phrasing could be construed as insulting to the president. I changed my phrasing in this draft because my intent was not to insult this thoughtful person; nevertheless, I was surprised that the sentence could be construed in that way.

[8]The National Assessment of Chapter 1.

After giving them this step by step guide to policy research, complete with examples, I proposed that we try to do another policy issue together, this time focusing on a policy issue that currently faced Thais. They seemed enthusiastic abut this, and all agreed that it would be a good idea to try to translate a Thai educational policy issue into a research agenda. But when I opened the floor to them, asking for proposals of a policy issue, I was again greeted with silence. After a uncomfortably long pause, one participant asked me for more detail about how we had done the Chapter 1 study. I answered him, paused again, and then received another question asking for more information. Eventually, we finished off this meeting without extending the process to Thai policy. Still, I felt this was my first successful presentation. I felt more animated, more sure that I had something of value to say, and they seemed more interested than they had been before. I thought I was finally getting the hang of these formal presentations: I had devised a talk that could be organized around a few clear points and had prepared overhead transparencies to reinforce these points. But in retrospect, I think I was more successful because I finally had learned something about them (from the president, at least), and this knowledge had given me some ideas about what kind of ideas might be useful to share with them.

I also had more success with my afternoon consultation with the conference planning committee. My schedule for this meeting said "Meet with Planning Committee on International Conference," but I now understood that, regardless of whether a meeting was labeled a meeting, a roundtable discussion, or an eggplant, it would begin with a presentation from me. This meeting, too, would be held in the United Nations room. I prepared a presentation.

But I persisted in my belief that I had no prescriptions to offer for their conference and that the most I could do was to help them think about it. In my presentation, I listed a number of ways one could organize a conference, and listed some advantages and disadvantages to each. As before, I sat at the head of this enormous table, next to the overhead projector, and a small group of perhaps six faculty sat off to my left and down the table a bit. We all used the microphone system to speak to one another, and I had a transparency to summarize my comments. This presentation seemed to be well received. Participants thanked me, said this was very useful, and even volunteered some of their own thoughts about these ideas. We actually had a conversation, in spite of the format of the room and the technology.[9]

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[9]This experience also demonstrates, as one of my Thai reviewers pointed out, that the formality of the room and the format of the presentation need not inhibit conversation.

So my first week of work with the university began badly but ended somewhat successfully. By the end of Friday, I felt that I was catching on, that I had figured out how to manage the situations they presented me with. I understood now that I had to open every meeting with a talk, but also that I did not really have to "give information." It was OK to give alternative ideas, and it was especially good if I could translate these ideas into a list of clear, concrete, points.[10] Moreover, I knew a little more about them and, consequently, about what I had to offer them.

5. Roundtable Discussion With Education Deans in the Region

The following Monday, I was scheduled for a "roundtable discussion with the education deans of public universities." The topic was "Reform of Teacher Education." This meeting was also held in the United Nations room, and I had an audience of perhaps 20. The meeting was scheduled to last two hours, and I decided to open it with a paper I had recently written entitled, "Policy Issues in Teacher Education." I had an overhead transparency summarizing the main points of the talk.

I should mention, incidentally, that in many of these meetings, one person was designated as a sort of master of ceremonies. This person would introduce me to the group and define the procedure for the meeting. At this meeting, the woman who introduced me suggested that I speak for about 1 3/4 hours, so that there would be time for questions afterwards. I said I would probably not speak for more than 45 minutes, because I wanted more time for discussion. Even though I was adjusting to their style, I was persistent in my desire (or commitment, or perhaps only habit) to promote discussion. I said that I would be talking about policy issues in the United States, and that I wanted also to learn about policy issues in Thailand. Throughout the talk, I continually emphasized that this was the United States and that the issues were no doubt different in Thailand.

After this presentation, the first comment I received was that the entire talk could just as easily have been about Thai teacher education. The similarities were remarkable. Several of the deans then discussed, both with me and with each other, the dimensions of their system and their teachers. Again, I felt I had been successful. I had given a lecture in the format they preferred, with an overhead that summarized my main points. In addition, in my discussion of policy issues in the United States, I was very candid about the problems we faced in the United States. It may have been easier in that context for them to reveal their own problems. In any case, the talk did stimulate conversation and as a

[10]On reading the draft of this paper, one of the Thais said that Thais value "applied knowledge." No doubt these presentations gave an impression of being applied, but to me they still seemed rather artificial.

result, I again managed to learn more about them. Maybe, eventually, a real dialogue would become possible.

But a single comment within this conversation made an even bigger impression on me than the fact of conversation itself. As we discussed the issue of improving teaching practice in Thailand, one of the deans used the phrase "Chalk and Talk" to refer to the dominant teaching method in use. He said he thought it was important for students to talk with each other because they could learn from each other. I was gratified to hear this, given my background and the assumptions about teaching and learning that I outlined above. But then he elaborated his rationale for student discussion by saying that students use so much slang these days that they may be unable to understand what the teacher is saying. So if they break into groups to talk, those who understood the teacher can explain what she said for the others. For this dean, then, the value of student conversation did not lie in the juxtaposition of different ideas, but in its potential for clarifying the information the teacher had already presented.

6. The Second Two-Day Workshop

The second workshop was to be on qualitative research methodology. Before coming to Thailand, I had been more worried about this workshop than the first because I had not taught this material before, and had no sense for what ideas would be difficult or hard, interesting or dull. Of course, my experiences in the United States had been of almost no value in preparing for the first workshop, but I still felt less sure of this workshop.

Two days before I was to present my second workshop, one of the faculty members who had attended the first workshop asked me how the preparation was going and if I was preparing some assignments. She asked it as an aside, not as a pointed question, but she made me wonder if this was the Thai expectation, that teaching consists not of guiding discussions but of giving lectures and then giving exercises. Maybe my audiences would have been more responsive if I had given them assignments. I never really answered her question, but it haunted me later on and I wondered what sort of assignment she had in mind. Since my teaching experiences were so limited, I was not accustomed to thinking about how assignments might promote learning. And since my experience with workshops was virtually nonexistent, I had no ideas about what kind of assignments I might make when the workshop itself would last only two days. The problem seemed especially perplexing in regard to qualitative research, one of the most tedious and time-consuming methodologies I know of. In the absence of actually wallowing in mudslides of data, I couldn't envision an

assignment that would give them a feel for the nature and special demands of qualitative research.

I also had very little time to prepare for this workshop, for a number of events had been scheduled just before it, including evening events. As before, my local hosts wanted all my overheads and handouts in advance, in this case before I had figured out what I wanted to do. So I asked them to make overheads, but not handouts, of all the notes and outlines I had brought from East Lansing, saying that I still was not sure which of these I would want to use. Apparently, this request was not understood, for in addition to the overheads, they made 40 copies of each piece of paper I had given them, and in the end, most of this material was not used.

In my continuing fear that I would not have enough to say, I stayed up very late the night before the workshop, trying to amass material to give the workshop participants, and so was extremely tired when I entered the seminar room. About 40 people were attending this workshop, and I made no effort to rearrange the room or to try to initiate any conversation. Despite the suggestion that I give assignments, I had not tried to think of any assignments, but continued to strive to fill the entire time with lecture. Ironically, it never occurred to me to construe a workshop as a place where people *work*. This was in part because I couldn't imagine what sort of assignment this audience would be willing to do, and in part because I had not taught this content and really didn't know what sort of assignment would make sense. So the workshop began as the first one had: I tried to fill the time with a slowly and carefully articulated lecture accompanied by overhead transparencies, and I occasionally asked questions that lead to nothing more than silence in the room.

Two experiences during this first day also made me more aware of the language difficulty. When students presented their research questions to the class, the question posed by the first group was, "Why do teachers not concern about PHC and only health?" I wondered if my remarks seemed as garbled to this student as his seemed to me. And earlier, during the first coffee break, a student came to me to ask what I had meant by the term, "varied." She showed me the place in her notes where she had written this word. Though I couldn't recall when I had used this term or why, I tried to define it for her, and suddenly realized that the word I had used was "valid," not "varied." Even though I was able to clarify the term for her, I realized that the point of my earlier discussion had been lost to her because she had processed it all with this one important word not understood.

The same Thai faculty member who had tried to help me during the first workshop tried also to help me with this one. At one point, he asked me if he could address the group in Thai, and suggested that I just sit down for a moment. He then launched into a

monologue that lasted nearly half an hour, and I had no idea what it was about. He occasionally mentioned my name, and so I assumed again that he must have been apologizing to the audience for this odd person from the West. I felt embarrassed. Eventually I realized that he was translating the gist of my remarks for them and asking them if they had questions. When he did this, he invariable received questions, posed in Thai. Students would stand at their desks, state their questions, and then he would turn to me and repeat the questions in English. The exchange proved helpful both to me and to the audience.

During the first morning's coffee break, this same faculty member, whom I now recognized as a would-be mentor, also asked if I would be giving any assignments. Receiving this question a second time was enough for me to realize that this is what they wanted. I still didn't know what the assignments should be, but knew that this is what they wanted and that this would make the time pass more easily. So I hastily devised a new plan: I would organize each half day such that there would be a lecture and then an assignment. Before lunch, I told the group that the remainder of the workshop would be devoted to three main phases of qualitative research—formulating questions, designing the study, and analyzing the data—and that they should use the lunch hour to form groups so that they could work on their research questions in the afternoon. I said the groupings could be any size or combination of people they wanted. But I think my Thai mentor-interpreter put more structure into the assignment, for the groups formed were quite equal in size.

After lunch, I launched into this new format. The lecture was "how to do it" and the assignment was practice doing it. Suddenly, with this new format, my lecture took on a vitality it had not had before. I was preparing them for a specific task, and I felt quite comfortable explaining to them what needed to be done, what would be hard about it, what the standards were for judging when you had done it well, and so forth. Students were very animated as they worked in groups on their tasks. I felt better, they seemed to feel better, and my adopted mentor volunteered that he thought the class was going well. I still hadn't figured out what I would assign for the last half-day session, which was supposed to be about data analysis, because they would not have any actual data to analyze.

I encouraged the groups to discuss their ideas in Thai rather than in English because I knew this would be easier for them, but this meant that I had little interaction with them while the worked. My Thai mentor circulated around the room and talked with different groups, and I tried to do so as well but was only occasionally called upon for help.

As the class worked on its first assignment, my mentor suggested that perhaps we should give each group a transparency so that they could present their work to the class.

I thought this was a fine idea. Since the session was scheduled to end at 4:00, I thought we should reconvene at 3:00, thus allowing 10 minutes for each group to present. But my mentor said I should not worry about the time, for Thais were a very succinct people and it would not take them long to present. Again I realized that my assumptions differed from his, for I had assumed there would be a conversation about each group's presentation.

In fact, despite this cue about what would happen, I persisted in thinking some discussion would be required, and as the first group presented, I was thinking about questions I could ask that might provoke some further thought from the students. But when the speaker finished, my mentor led the class in a round of applause and the speaker sat down smiling and satisfied. This routine continued for the remaining presentations. Most presenters spoke only in English, but some presented twice, once in Thai and once in English.

I finished the first day satisfied with this new workshop format. Even though the process was substantially different from the kind of learning process I had experienced in the past, it was far more comfortable than the lecture format had been, and it was clearly satisfying the audience. I decided to finish off the workshop in the same way. I no longer wanted to encourage discussion: Activity was enough.

That evening, as I prepared for the second day of the workshop on qualitative methods, I felt like I was becoming a pro at this task. I would sit at my computer and generate an outline and lecture notes, and as soon as I had finished a section, I would move to another table and prepare an overhead to go with it. The pattern was quite regular. Prepare a unit, then make the overhead to go with it. Then return to the computer and write a matching handout. Then move to the next unit and prepare another portion of lecture. I was getting more adept at writing on transparencies, too. The felt-tipped pens had thick points and the space available was small, so that my first efforts were very crude looking. But by this time, I had not only acquired a better sense for what kind of content should go on a transparency, and for how to summarize that content in brief, shorthand phrases, but also how to write more neatly on them, so that they were more readable to the audience.

By the morning of the second day, I felt it had all fallen together. I was prepared, they were prepared, we had reached a satisfactory understanding of what we were going to do together. I could talk more freely now, because I understood my role. My presentations were very closely related to the assignments. I would explain a stage of research, talk about what was entailed in doing it, give an example, and then give them practice trying it themselves. And my mentor and I had worked out a system wherein I would present

material for an hour or so, and then he or another faculty member would re-present the same material in Thai. So the whole workshop had slipped into a predictable and workable routine. It all made sense, and I began to feel I was in control of the situation.

In fact, during one of the pauses, while a Thai faculty member repeated my points in Thai, I found myself thinking this was a pretty good workshop, and that perhaps I should do it again now that it was fully developed. I thought about ways it could be streamlined, so that the timing of the English lecture, the Thai translation, and the practice sessions better fit within the scheduled working periods and breaks. I had to get better at anticipating how much time the translation would take, and better at planning for breaks. But in general, the system seemed like a good one, and the audience felt they were learning something.

This is not to say that I had no reservations. I still could not bring myself, for instance, to applaud after student presentations, and by the end of the second afternoon, no one else applauded either. I'm not sure, in retrospect, that this was a good outcome because it meant that once a presentation was finished, nothing happened. We didn't have the kind of discussion that I would have considered a good way to recognize what had been done, and we didn't have the kind of applause that the Thais would have considered as a recognition of what had been done. There was simply silence until the next speaker took the podium.

And I still had reservations about the value of the assignments. What I finally invented for the last assignment was an analysis *plan*. I knew that this was too far removed from real data analysis to have any real meaning, and that one really could not understand this method of research, certainly could not understand what is entailed in analyzing the data, without actually doing it. And I knew that most of the other assignments were also pretty superficial. And finally, after the workshop was finished, when I tossed dozens of overhead transparencies into a wastebasket, and hundreds of copies of unused handouts into a wastebasket, I also thought the process had been wasteful. But I didn't really care, because I had been successful. I had learned to teach.

7. Faculty Retreat to Establish the Research and Conference Agenda

Almost directly on the heels of the workshop on qualitative research methods was a two-day retreat in which two groups of faculty—those involved in establishing the new research center and those involved in developing the international conference—met to flesh out their plans. The retreat opened formally, with both groups in one room to hear opening remarks from the Dean and opening remarks from me. Faculty then separated into two

rooms. Each group consisted of around six people, and each meeting room provided a reasonably sized table around which people could gather. Though I moved back and forth between the two groups, I tended to spend more time with the research planning group. The discussions that occurred during this retreat were much more like those I was accustomed to in the United States. They were lively and there was some real give-and-take. We even used large sheets of paper to summarize the points people made throughout the day and taped them to the walls around us.

The discussion followed the outline I had proposed in my earlier talk about policy research. Participants began by defining various policy issues, then listed some researchable questions relevant to each issue, and then defined some studies that could address those questions. The discussions of policy issues were remarkably sophisticated. Participants were far more sensitive to the dilemmas and nuances of policy issues than many American faculties, whose ivory towers remove them from the pragmatic world of policy, often are. They were thinking hard, and were clearly dedicated to this task. My role consisted of asking questions that would force them to make distinctions or to wrestle with some apparent contradictions, and offering some procedural suggestions for how to organize the discussion. During later stages, when they tried to delineate researchable questions and then to define actual research studies that could be done, I intervened a bit more, either offering suggestions, pointing out discrepancies, or asking questions.

I was also absent from both groups for a large portion of time, in part because I rotated between the groups, and in part because, since the retreat was held in my hotel, I occasionally went to my room and used my portable computer to write summaries of the ideas that had been generated. I used these summaries in part to provide a bit of organization and structure to the work as it progressed, and in part to give quick feedback to each group. Both groups seemed to appreciate these summaries.

More than any other event in which I had participated during this visit, the retreat matched my American definition of consultation. It seemed to me that the work was really their work, not mine, and that it was guided by their concerns. My role was not to tell them what to do, or how to do it, but instead to help them reason through their own dilemmas and find strategies for handling them. Even still, the guidance I offered was more formulaic than it would have been in the United States. By the end of the retreat, for instance, the group working on the research agenda had developed a series of worksheets. Each sheet articulated policy issues within a particular segment of education, then identified researchable questions within that issue, then listed potential research projects that could be done to answer these questions, and then listed things like who could work on this

project and some possible funding sources for the work. Everyone felt the retreat had been remarkably successful, including me, and the timing was nice since I would be leaving Thailand in just a few more days.

In fact, I still left them with too many things unattended to. The research agenda we had devised during these two days extended far beyond their capacity, and we had not discussed ways of setting priorities, ways of finding staffing and finding funding, and numerous other issues that come up when one moves beyond the brainstorming stage and into the real conduct of research. Still, I was able to leave Chulalongkorn University with a sense of accomplishment.

Epilogue

I argued at the outset of this paper that this was a story of learning to teach. If that is true, I need to define what was learned. If the teacher's task is to connect subject matter to learners, then teachers need to understand both their subject and their learners. Clearly, I learned something about both during this episode. I learned more about my audience, and consequently became better able to recast my subject matter knowledge to make it meaningful for this audience. But prior to this teaching experience my subject matter knowledge had been largely tacit, and the demands of this teaching assignment required me to explicate and organize my subject matter knowledge and to enter the teaching situation with an explicit, self-defined purpose, something I had almost never done before.

In fact, not only was my subject matter knowledge tacit, but so was my knowledge of teaching and learning. So in addition to learning about my audience and learning to explicate my subject matter knowledge, the experience enabled me to learn about my own previously tacit views about teaching and learning.

One could also interpret the case as illustrating the tensions involved in learning to teach when prior beliefs about the Right Thing differ from audience beliefs, so that there is no clear definition of what should be done. I had entered the situation with the idea that learning occurred when a group of people came together with a shared body of knowledge and a shared problem and when, together, they refined their thinking through discussion. But in these teaching assignments, my audience and I did not share a set of assumptions or a set of problems to be solved. Consequently, I had to learn a different view about how learning occurs and what the teacher's role is in promoting learning. But the fact that I still felt discomfort at the end of the second workshop suggests that perhaps I really did not alter my original views, but instead learned only how to alter my strategies to satisfy my audience. Perhaps all I learned was to go through a set of motions that gave the audience a sense of

satisfaction, while retaining the same views I had before I visited Thailand. If this is so, then this case study may be an illustration of *lack of learning*, not an illustration of learning.

In fact, it is not clear what I would do differently if I were to return for another month of workshops, roundtable discussions, and lectures. The knowledge I now have about this audience, about myself and my own beliefs about teaching and learning, and about the subject matter knowledge I have to offer does not produce a clear prescription for how to teach. If anything, it makes the task even more complex because I now have to consider all this knowledge, whereas before I could naively assume I knew best and that if there was a problem it must be the audiences' fault.

Viewed in this way, the case is difficult to interpret. On one hand, it illustrates how remarkably resilient prior beliefs about teaching and learning can be, even when those beliefs come from experiences whose relevance to teaching are dubious at best. On the other hand, it illustrates a willingness to make striking changes in performance in order to accommodate the audience, even when these changes conflict sharply with prior beliefs. The apparent contradiction between these two outcomes—resistance and at the same time adaptation—makes it difficult to define what was, in fact, learned.

Indeed, the case is still unresolved. Perhaps, had this teaching tour lasted longer, I would have eventually developed a different strategy for resolving the tension. Perhaps I would have abandoned my initial beliefs about teaching and learning and adopted beliefs that better matched my new behaviors. Perhaps, instead, I would have found a way to enact the beliefs I already had.